

**Testimony of Karen Foley-Schain M.A., M.Ed. LPC,  
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Good morning. My name is Karen Foley-Schain and I am the Executive Director of the State of Connecticut's Children's Trust Fund.

I am here to testify against HB Bill 6375, An Act Concerning Review and Termination of Certain Boards and Commissions, specifically Section 1 (53) which would abolish the Nurturing Families Network Advisory Commission.

For your background, the Connecticut Children's Trust Fund is a state Executive Branch Agency charged with preventing child abuse and neglect and providing resources for families to ensure the positive growth and development of Connecticut's children.

The Trust Fund is responsible for a budget of about \$17 million and a staff of 18. The staff of the Trust Fund develops, implements, and manages several major state, federal and privately funded initiatives. In addition the staff executes and maintains 90 contracts with more than 100 organizations.

One of the key initiatives of the Trust Fund is the Nurturing Families Network.

The Nurturing Families Network provides comprehensive prevention services to families giving birth at all of the twenty-nine maternity hospitals in the state. Services are offered at forty-two locations with expanded programs in the cities of Hartford and New Haven.

The Nurturing Families Network provides parent education and support for 5,000 new parents each year. It offers:

- Intensive Home Visiting to new parents facing multiple challenges and who are at high risk for child abuse and neglect.
- Nurturing Parenting Groups that assist parents in developing skills, attitudes and behaviors to become better parents and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.
- Nurturing Connections which links new parents with volunteers and other resources that can help a family adjust to the many demands that come with parenthood.

The Nurturing Families Network has been rigorously researched and evaluated by the University of Hartford Center for Social Research. The results have been consistently

strong. The program has been shown to be effective in reducing the incidence of child abuse and neglect and to improve the well being of both the parents and children who participate in the program.

The Nurturing Families Network Advisory Commission was instrumental in the growth and development of the Nurturing Families Network. The insight and support of commission members established a road map for the Trust Fund to follow in building this important program.

While we were in this building phase, the advisory commission was dormant. But now that we have achieved the vision it set out, we are ready for a new phase of growth and development. We believe the Advisory Commission can play a vital role in this next phase.

In fact, a few months ago we launched an effort to reactivate and re-energize the advisory commission. We recruited members and held our first meeting last month.

The Trust Fund envisions the Nurturing Families Network Advisory Board supporting our efforts to broaden the scope of Nurturing Families to provide the additional support parents and families need to succeed. Development efforts include:

- A program that would provide counseling and assistance to new mothers suffering from depression.
- Enhancing our efforts to prevent shaken baby syndrome.
- A greater focus on fathers to make certain they play a positive role in the lives of children.
- A web based system to more efficiently gather information to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

Information on the Nurturing Families Network and some of these efforts is attached.

The Nurturing Families Network has played an important part in the lives thousands Connecticut Families over the past 12 years. The work we envision for the advisory commission will help the Children's Trust Fund shape the next era of the Nurturing Families Network to meet new and emerging needs of the families of our state.

There is no real cost associated with the continued existence of the advisory commission and its ability make a contribution to the families of this state. I therefore urge this committee to move against adoption of Section 1 (53) of HB Bill 6375.

Thank you.